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Meet Sandra Griffin, ADM Quality Assurance



Sandra Griffin joined MCFD in March as Assistant Deputy Minister, Quality Assurance. Or as she clarifies, Integrated Quality Assurance. "In order to

know how we are doing, we have to know how our systems are working. We need the feedback within the system telling us when it's working and when it's not." Sandra cites the oodles of files, databases and information currently in the system, yet "we don't have very many good ways to roll that information up and be able to tell a story of what we're doing."

Working under Pillar 5 of the Strong, Safe and Supported Operational Plan, Sandra and her office are developing an implementation strategy and framework for what will take place over the upcoming year.



Sandra Griffin,
ADM, Quality Assurance

An interface unit launched in June will be the major organizing component for all the interaction the department has with various oversight bodies. "All the various reports that have recommendations attached (Hughes, Northern, Coroner's Inquest, AG reports) we'll be able to take those

"In all this work we have to never lose sight of the fact that all of our decisions impact people's lives. Our ministry's work is about people's lives."

recommendations and start tracking and monitoring [them]." Not just the recommendations, but the information itself. The unit, Sandra explains, will work in conjunction with Information Systems Transformation, the new integrated case management system. "That's going to take a lot of pressure off the team in Provincial office and in the Regions and create effectiveness and efficiencies that we don't have at present."

As someone who has worked in the field of children and family development for close to 35 years, Sandra believes the health and wellbeing of children and families is the basis of health and wellbeing for a nation. "I believe this ministry is filled with people who come everyday because they know their work makes a difference. What the media and public don't know and what they're not hearing, and what I think our people are thrilled to talk about is all those cases where in fact, because the ministry was there being a partner, supporting those services, it made a difference. And I think in a good quality assurance system those stories have a natural way out as well."



BRITISH
COLUMBIA
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Child Welfare Concerns Crash Language Barriers

"Most children grow up in families where they are safe and secure. Others may be abused or neglected – and those children need our help. Whether they are our own kids, a neighbour's or a stranger's, we all have a role to play in keeping children safe."

These words – a crucial part of the MCFD mandate – have been echoed in reports, news releases and printed material within and outside of the ministry. Not to be stymied by language barriers many of our publications have been translated and re-released to the public. Such is the most recent case with "Responding to Child Welfare Concerns: Your Role in Knowing When and What to Report". The 14-page handbook on recognizing signs of child neglect and abuse is now available in Chinese, French, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese, as well as English.

In addition to recognizing the warning signs, "Responding to Child Welfare Concerns" offers tips on how to respond to a child in need and how to contact a child welfare worker. It explains what constitutes abuse and neglect and gives details about the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, the law that protects children from abuse in BC. The handbook also outlines what to expect when you make a report and offers information on the various options and organizations to find help. Most importantly, the handbook tackles how we as a community can prevent abuse and neglect from occurring.

To access the handbook in various languages visit http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/translated.htm

Every Child's Life Matters

Keeping Our Children Strong, Safe & Supported

by: Desiree Bachmann

I just wanted to share some success with all of you, who were involved in the very toughest of times, for one of our children in continuing care – Gloria.

At the foster parents appreciation dinner in October I was able to catch up with Gloria's foster parents and I was amazed at how different her life has become over the past four years.

I remember a time when you would have all been receiving Reportables about Gloria on a weekly basis. At that point, I thought that success was keeping her alive. Gloria was seriously addicted to crystal meth, dealing with mental health issues and living in very unsafe situations on the street. After being Certified under the Mental Health Act, spending six months at the Crossroads program at Maples, and over a year living in Columbia House, Gloria moved in with two amazing

foster parents - Heidi and her partner Tracy.

On Thursday, Heidi told me that Gloria has been completely drug free for almost four years now. She is completely stabilized on her medications, is attending a school program in North Vancouver and has goals of becoming a psychiatric nurse. Gloria has made new connections with her maternal family, and reconnected with her paternal family; she attends Sweats weekly with her Dad and Sundances every summer. Gloria – whom at one point required 24-hour supervision – is now waking herself up in the mornings, making her own breakfast and lunches, taking transit independently, budgeting and shopping for groceries, attending medical appointments and participating in extra curricular activities.

I realize that a lot of money was spent on Gloria's care, and I wanted to let you all know how much of a difference it has made. Gloria was so lucky to have such wonderful people standing behind her – especially the amazing staff at Columbia House, and Heidi and Tracy, who are so fantastic. Gloria deserves a lot of credit, herself, because regardless of all of the opportunities that she has had, she is the one making the choice daily to live this life and not go back to using.

But mostly I wanted to thank all of you for your roles in providing opportunities to her, truly, every little piece has contributed to this miracle in her life.

Gloria is now in continuing care with Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society, and will be turning 19 in July.



Smoke-Free Foster Homes (and Cars)

MCFD released its Smoke-Free Environment Policy for foster homes in May 2008, requiring there be no smoking in the foster home or the foster family's vehicle. While many foster parents are already mindful of the harmful effects of second-hand smoke, the new policy ensures everyone living in or visiting a foster household benefits from a smoke-free environment.

The Ministry partnered with the BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations (BCFFPA) and the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents (FAFP) on the policy, which further promotes the health and well-being of our children and youth. The policy does not apply to the use of tobacco for cultural or traditional purposes.

Letters sent to approximately 3500 foster parents in May announced the policy, recognizing that it might take time for some homes to comply with the policy. Foster parents who had a current Family Care Home Agreement with the Ministry, a Delegated Aboriginal Agency or Community Living British Columbia had until November 1, 2008, to create a smoke-free environment. New foster parents signing their initial Family Care Home Agreement on or after May 1 were expected to provide a smoke-free environment as of the date of their agreement.

The policy does not require that foster parents stop smoking altogether; however the ministry offered support to foster parents and other smokers in the home who did want to quit by covering the costs of nicotine gum or patches or prescription medication

until October 31, 2008. Services available through QuitNow, a free 24 hours a day service operated by the BC Lung Association, continue to be available to assist those who want to quit smoking.

According to Statistics Canada data, one in five children under the age of 12 are exposed to second-hand smoke in cars. Further studies suggest vehicle second-hand smoke can be up to 27 times more concentrated than in a smoker's home. Be it the home or car, children's lungs are still developing and they breathe faster than adults do. As a result, children exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to suffer Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, acute respiratory infections, ear problems, and more severe asthma.

For more information, visit <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/effect.htm>.

In Brief

Foster Family Month

October was Foster Family Month and every region recognized the thousands of foster families across the province and the remarkable contribution they make in our communities. Numerous foster parent appreciation luncheons, dinners and events took place in all five regions over the course of the month. In addition, a nation-wide public service announcement to raise awareness about fostering and adoption aired in theatres across Canada throughout October.

Roots Are Forever

The Fraser region "Roots are Forever" program provided two opportunities for Aboriginal children and youth to connect with their families, communities and culture this summer.

In total 28 children and youth, one birth mother, one grandmother and 11 foster parents attended Homecoming ceremonies, including a 17-year-old who reconnected with his mother whom he had not seen since he was two, and met his siblings and their children for the very first time.

Youth Centre Graduates

The South Vancouver Youth Centre (SVYC) School Program was proud to acknowledge their first two graduates on June 12th. The ceremony was the first of its kind for the agency, as 50 guests warmly welcomed Amanda and Steven while they accepted flowers, a commemorative plaque and enduring affection from an enthusiastic crowd.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



December 10:
International Human
Rights Day

January 30 - February 2: Early
Years Conference, Vancouver BC

February 26 - March 1: Autism
Biennial Congress 2009 - Autism
Through the Lifespan, Vancouver,
BC

March 4 - 5: 10th Annual Alberta
Harm Reduction Conference,
Edmonton, AB

March 11 - 14: 3rd International
Conference on Fetal Alcohol
Spectrum Disorder, Victoria, BC



Making a Kinnection

The Ministry of Children and Family Development has taken steps to support youth in care and invest in their future by announcing the Kinnections youth mentorship program for youth ages 15 to 19 in continuing care. Here's how the program came about.

First, current and former youth in care were consulted and together they identified three key elements they would like to establish in a youth mentorship program.

1. That mentors be volunteers and not paid to support young people's lives.
2. The youth voice be acknowledged, understood and considered in planning services for them.
3. That proper supports be determined to provide the best possible opportunity for successful mentoring partnerships.

Next, research into national and international best practices in the area of child development and mentorship programs were explored, leading to Kinnections adopting lessons learned in the area of resilience, attachment, and youth development. Specifically, the program adopted Dr. Martin Brokenleg's Circle of Courage, as its foundation. The Circle of Courage identifies four areas for positive youth development:

- Belonging – having a sense of connection
- Independence – learning respect and teaching inner discipline through problem solving and personal responsibility
- Mastery – observing and listening to those with more experience to achieve greater competence

- Generosity – helping others, allowing youth to create their own proof of worthiness by making a positive contribution to another human life

Combining the youth wish list and research, Kinnections is designed to be youth centered and encourage lifelong connections through mentorship. Kinnections begins by mapping out with youth any positive people who are, or may have once been, in their active network to approach as prospective mentors. Where youth cannot identify anyone appropriate, the program coordinator reviews the youth's personality, goals and life experience with that of pre-screened mentors to suggest the best possible match.

Taking the program a step further, the eligibility age allows former youth in continuing care, at age 19, to self refer to the program and for youth mentor matches to be supported beyond the age of 19. At the end of the day the goal is to create a community of support for young people starting with a lifelong connection to at least one person.

To ensure the youth voice remains integrated with Kinnections, youth are being incorporated in the evaluation of the program's first year and

included in an advisory council that reviews mentorship best practices and proposes further program adjustments. The Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks and the MCFD Youth Advisory Council are also supporters of this program.

The Kinnections pilot project is being implemented in partnership with contracted agencies Urban Native Youth Association in Vancouver, PLEA in Maple Ridge/Ridge Meadows and Pacific Community Resource Society in Surrey, Delta, Langley, and White Rock (please visit <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/kinnections.htm> for a full list of the eligibility requirements by community).

Currently, Kinnections has 11 active youth mentor matches. If referred youth are unable to identify someone appropriate to be their mentor, there are approximately 15 pre-screened mentors with amazing skills and energy waiting to be matched in mentorship with youth in continuing care.

If you have questions about Kinnections, please visit the web page or send an email to Jules Wilson at mcf.kinnections@gov.bc.ca. We thank our growing ranks of supporters and look forward to updating you soon!

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?



Are you a staff member or service provider involved in delivering an innovative program or service? Do you know someone who deserves to be recognized?

Click on the link below to send us your idea in 100 words or less and your suggestion may be featured in a future article. MCF.NewsletterFeedback@gov.bc.ca



What's Working for BC's Youth?

On June 9th and 10th, 2008, MCFD held "Strong, Safe and Supported: A Congress on BC's Children and Youth". Approximately 300 delegates heard from the Honourable Premier Campbell, Ministers Christensen and Reid, Deputy Minister du Toit and numerous presenters from around the province whose programs and services are making a difference for BC's children and youth.

The first day of the Congress focused on the report *What's Working for Children, Youth and Families in BC*, consisting of presentations on successful and innovative projects across BC. The presentations highlighted the five good-practice themes outlined in the report: child-centered, family and community-based, systems change, cultural touchstones and sound process.

Six programs were selected from a larger group of nominated services from each region to present to Congress attendees:

FRIENDS for Life (Provincial Office) – a school-based early intervention and prevention program that helps children cope with and manage anxiety and depression now and later in life.

VAST Education Centre (Vancouver Island) – an alternative school program for high risk youth in Port Alberni.

Roving Youth Leaders (Vancouver Coastal) – identifies and bridges service gaps for at risk youth.

Coming Home Camps (North) – connects Aboriginal children in care and their families with the children's territorial lands, communities, culture and traditions.

Newton Family Resource Program (Fraser) – an informal program for parents, grandparents, caregivers and children under age 6 that focuses on parent education and family support.

Community Action Towards Children's Health Program (CATCH) (Interior) – establishing priorities for Early Childhood Development.

All nominated services are examples of the excellent programs in place across BC showing how global "promising practice" in strengths-based approaches to supporting children and families are working in the province.



What's Working Committee: Sara Bristow, Vanessa Currie and Dr. Philip Cook

Day two of the Congress focused on Transformation with a "where do we go from here" theme. DM Lesley du Toit spoke passionately about the transformation vision and the importance of our work and our practices. Her call to action including focusing on each child individually and in the moment was memorable and inspiring.

In a spontaneous response to the Deputy Minister's address, Grand

Chief Stewart Philip also spoke about the importance and meaning of the Congress and described his support for the Deputy Minister and the transformation vision.

Another highlight of the day was a speech from Reverend Dr. Martin Brokenleg, both moving and meaningful. He spoke of the four aspects of the Circle of Courage as universal needs in each life of a child stating, "When a person is in crisis we need to surround them with attachment."

The final day of the Congress also included a panel discussion with MCFD's Leadership Team about their work towards transformation. Attendees also listened to informative presentations from a variety of groups, including the Youth Advisory Council and Family Finders, each demonstrating how such programs have made a positive difference in the life of a child in BC.

DVD recordings of the two-day Congress have been sent to all Regions to provide staff with an opportunity to experience the highlights. To keep the momentum of transformation moving, each region will be hosting their own congress in the next few months to further highlight "What's Working" in their region.

Meet Kathy Berggren-Clive, Director of Advocacy

As a social work practitioner for the past 27 years in both government and the not for profit sector and having worked for MCFD as a front-line social worker, the upholding of children's rights has been



Kathy Berggren-Clive,
Director of Advocacy

fundamental to my work. For the past eight years, I have worked in an official capacity as a child and youth advocate; central to that role was my commitment and passion to increasing my knowledge, practice and expertise in the area of children's rights, child and youth participation and advocacy. I began with the Office of the Child, Youth and Family Advocate and then as the Manager of Advocacy Services for the former Child and Youth Officer for BC. Most recently, I was the Acting Director of Advocacy for the Representative for Children

and Youth before re-joining MCFD as the Director of Advocacy in February 2008.

As a child and youth advocate, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the framework that guides my work. The UNCRC is based on the developmental needs of children and is a way for us to declare that a basic quality of life should be the right of all children, rather than a privilege enjoyed by a few. The UNCRC provided me an increased understanding about the importance of children and youth knowing about their rights so that they can claim those rights. As well, the UNCRC also holds adults accountable to bettering the lives of children and identifies government's responsibility in upholding children's rights. We need to fully integrate the theoretical and practical implications of the UNCRC and to be able to effectively instill this knowledge in others if we really want to move the child rights agenda

forward in British Columbia. In other words, we need to speak the same language, have a shared understanding and in turn, create a common goal.

In my new position as the Director of Advocacy for MCFD, the overall goal is to promote the rights, views, interests and well-being of children and youth through a continuum of advocacy initiatives across all program areas both regionally and provincially. The Advocacy Team is part of Integrated Quality Assurance and has the primary role of promoting and supporting MCFD staff as part of good practice to advocate for the rights, interests, voice and well-being of children receiving services. The Team is responsible for establishing effective advocacy and monitoring within MCFD of child and youth rights in relation to the UN Convention with a particular emphasis on child and youth participation and any other special rights such as the Section 70 Rights of children in care.

Kudos To ...

On March 8th, **Jennifer Mervyn**, a CYMH Clinician in White Rock, was presented with a **Celebrating Women & the Spirit of the Cranes** (Gold) award, which recognizes outstanding women in Metro Vancouver. Jennifer's nomination was for her work in the community, particularly with youth. Last year she led a photo-therapy project with street involved youth that garnered international attention at the United Nations' World Urban Forum.

The photography depicted the youths' interpretations of issues such as hunger and homelessness, and how these issues affected their lives, families, and community. Jennifer has also been internationally recognized for her film "Metamorphosis: An In-Depth Look at the Lives of Former Street Kids".

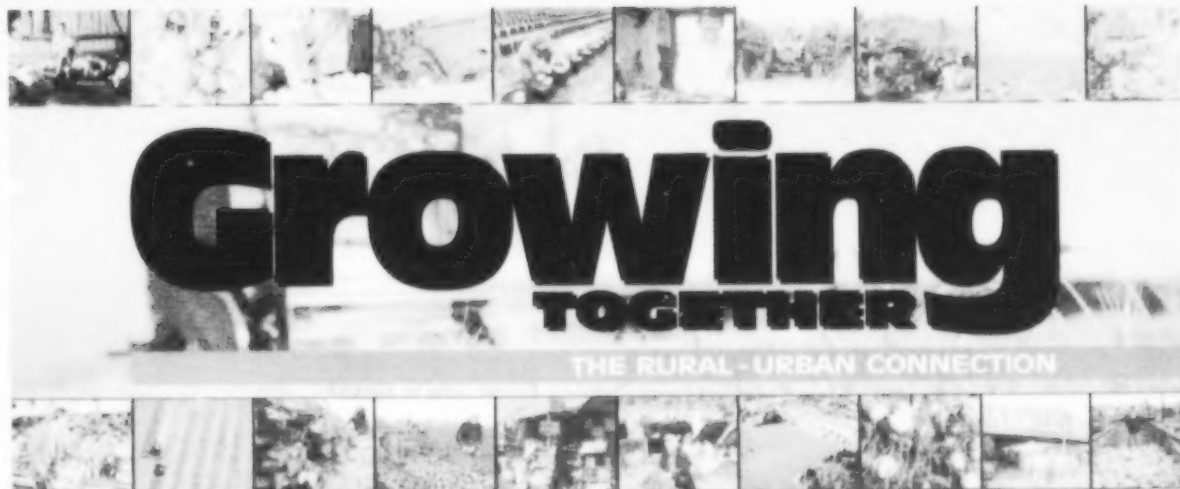
Twenty-five Innovation Champions across the Public Service participated in the first Innovation Conference in September. **Andrea Ames** (Transformation Support Team, Victoria), **Diane Bruce** (Practice Development Team, Surrey) and **Anne Kishiyama** (Deputy Director, Adoptions, Interior Region) were nominated and chosen as the Innovation Champions representing MCFD. As Innovation Champions, these two will help facilitate innovation and create the habitat for generating new ideas in the BC public service.

Jackie Matvenko, HR Advisor in Cranbrook, issued a challenge to the offices on her caseload to do away with the blue paper pay stub. The Castlegar District Office is the first office to report the demise of the blue stubs and will be awarded a team prize. Although other offices still have a few folks who haven't changed, there is a number of staff in each of them who have opted for 'electronic'.

SIGN ME UP



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Growing TOGETHER

THE RURAL-URBAN CONNECTION

Fall, 1999 Vol 1, No. 1

Finding the Balance in Planning

Can a municipality balance the needs of agriculture and urban development? How does a local government set policy that protects both environmental and agricultural interests? What are the needs of the local agriculture industry? These are a few of the questions that all levels of government are grappling with as they attempt to find planning solutions that will help sustain agriculture in their communities. U.B.C.M.'s local governments (1) sustain land within the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) and a growing number are creating agriculture plans to help foster the development of their local agricultural sector. They are addressing some of the challenges from infrastructure and increased competition for agricultural land, and establishing long-term strategies to ensure the sustainability of their local agricultural communities. In 1990, the Township of Langley adopted the Langley Rural Plan. Most of the rural planning area is in the ALR, supporting the municipality's annual \$150 million (1995) agriculture industry. When adopted, the Plan stood apart from other planning exercises in its commitment to proactively support sustainable agriculture. The Plan has a particularly extensive section dealing with economic issues that benefited from the involvement of the Township's Economic Development



Maintaining buffers between farming and residential uses in Abbotsford helps to enhance land use compatibility.

Commissioner Paul Crawford, a key Langley staff person working on the Plan, stated, "The primary goal of the Plan is to enhance agricultural viability through protection of agricultural land, preservation of large tracts and creation of policies to encourage the agricultural industry." In 1990, the City of Surrey established an Agriculture and Land Use Advisory Committee (ALAC) consisting of representatives from the local agricultural community, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Agricultural Land Commission, the City, the Public, and the Environmental

Advisory Committee. Lesley Armon is an Associate Planner for the City of Surrey and has become a strong proponent of agricultural planning. "Agriculture is one of our most important industries, and our plan has helped to resolve all kinds of urban and rural issues," she said. "It provided a framework to resolve disputes. Everyone involved is pleased with the results." The Surrey ALAC began the process of forming an Agricultural Plan with a mail-out survey to all landowners in the city's agricultural areas. The results clearly indicated that urban encroachment and rising land prices were of serious concern to local farmers. These, and other issues, are now being addressed by the ALAC. On the Saanich Peninsula the

Saanich Agricultural Strategy is helping to guide and promote agriculture. Developed by the Peninsula Agricultural Commission, the strategy has identified issues that limit local agriculture and made recommendations to help sustain the industry. "We're representing farmers and giving them a voice," said John Kay, chair of the Peninsula Agricultural Commission. "Our principle role is to advise municipal government. We're supported by the administration and it's making a difference. Now, we're getting ready to tackle

some real issues." The efforts on the Saanich Peninsula serve as a good example of several communities getting together to resolve common issues. The Strategy was developed collectively by Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney. The success of the Agricultural Strategy is clearly based on the commitment of the four municipalities to their agricultural community. The strategy has already had an impact on water rates. In Central Saanich, for example, agricultural water rates have been reduced from \$2.25 to 80 cents per 100 gallons. In addition, a public relations campaign has been implemented encouraging island consumers to shop for local produce. Like the Surrey ALAC, the Peninsula Agricultural Commission exists

"Agriculture is one of our most important industries, and our plan has helped us resolve all kinds of urban and rural conflict."

Lesley Armon, Associate Planner, Surrey

due to thoughtful municipal leaders who recognize the contribution that agriculture makes to their community. Kelowna is another community with a long agricultural history benefiting from an ALAC. The City when updating its Official Community Plan in 1994, made a commitment to make a commitment to make

result, the Kelowna Agriculture Plan was adopted last year, and will help to reduce existing conflict between urban and agricultural land use. In the fall of 1998, Larry Foster, a planner with the City, spoke about the Plan at a Planning Institute of British Columbia conference in Penticton. He characterized the planning process as an excellent agricultural strategy building exercise for all involved. The key objectives of Kelowna's Agriculture Plan are to strengthen farming and ensure the preservation of agricultural land. He noted that, "When agriculture is doing well economically, we all do well." Other communities are taking notice. In June of this year, Mayor Anne Murray and staff of the District of North Cowichan met with members of the farm community and staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) and the Agricultural Land Commission.

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U.B.C.M. Joins Committee on Agriculture and Environment

Eighteen months after it was formed, the Partnership Committee on Agriculture and the Environment has lived up to its mandate to support a growing agriculture industry that is both environmentally and economically sound. The joint government/industry committee is intended to facilitate consultation on environmental issues that affect farmers and agriculture, both from the provincial and federal ministries of Agriculture and Environment, together with representatives of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) meet with Directors of the BC Agriculture Council (BAC) four times a year. "It is essential to have local government input at the table," said Russell Hinch, a councillor from Lake Country and the former Chair of the BAC. UBCM plays an important role through the involvement of its local governments in the Partnership Committee. For the Partnership Committee to move these two tasks, the following is a list of issues that have been tackled to date:

Ditch Maintenance Guidelines: The Partnership Committee has developed a process to develop ditch maintenance protocols and guidelines that are acceptable to the farming community and environmental networks. A pilot project is operating in the Fraser

Valley this summer. The intent is to provide farmers with clear, practical and environmentally acceptable ways of achieving their objectives and drainage needs, without damaging valuable fish habitat. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) on Farm Advisory Service: The Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks have signed three MOUs with the BC Agriculture Council, BAC, Horticultural Commission and BC Cattlemen's Association that establish the role of peer advisors in contributing to environmental protection.

Mudroom Composting: The Partnership Committee assisted the committee on Mudroom Composting chaired by MLA John van Doogen. With the development and adoption of a Farm Before the

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